

CPYRGHT

Novel Claims Agency 'Set Up' Munitions Burglary

Mounting Evidence Links CIA to 'Plot' Probe

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Do the long tentacles of the Central Intelligence Agency reach deep into Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison's Kennedy death plot investigation?

There is mounting evidence they do, and at least one Garrison probe figure intends to use CIA connections as part of his defense.

Still others linked to the Garrison investigation have been named as acting for the super secret espionage organization — as informers, as purifiers and munitions carriers.

EVEN THE INVESTIGATION'S PIVOTAL figure, 54-year-old Clay L. Shaw, has had CIA connections attributed to him. Shaw, charged with complicity in Kennedy's death, was linked with the CIA by an influential Italian newspaper.

The strongest CIA ties lead to Gordon Novel,

a 29-year-old fugitive witness who is fighting extradition at Columbus, Ohio.

Novel, a one-time New Orleans bar owner and electronics expert, has told a number of friends and intimates he was a CIA operative and will use this role to battle Garrison's charges.

The defense will be laid down, Novel says, if he is returned to New Orleans to face accusations

This story is the joint effort of States-Item staff members Hoke May, David Snyder, Ross Yockey, and Rosemary James and R. T. Endicott of the Dayton (Ohio) Daily News.

that he burglarized an oil service company's munitions bunker in nearby Terrebonne Parish.

NOVEL'S ATTORNEY AT NEW ORLEANS, Steven Plotkin, would not deny his client's reported statements.

"I will neither confirm nor deny them," Plotkin said.

Novel is free in Columbus on \$10,000 bond. He was arrested April 1 in suburban Gahanna, Ohio, on Garrison's warrant charging he helped plan the munitions burglary in 1961.

He is accused both of conspiracy and burglary along with 44-year-old Sergio Arcacha Smith of Dallas, once the leader of a militant anti-Castro organization in New Orleans. Garrison charges they conspired with another key JFK probe figure, David W. Ferrie, to stage the munitions theft.

FERRIE WAS A STRANGE, HAIRLESS former airline pilot who died of what the Orleans Parish coroner called "natural causes" five days after Garrison's investigation was made public. The New Orleans DA said Ferrie was "one of history's most important men."

The charges against Novel and Arcacha are spinoffs from Garrison's main investigation. The prosecutor has called Novel "a very important wit-

ness" and has filed a material witness warrant against him.

Novel, who has to be one of history's most loquacious fugitives, has carried on a running long-distance feud with the man who wants him to do his talking before a grand jury. He repeatedly has called Garrison's investigation a "fraud" and a "fiction."

He has held a number of press conferences and submitted himself to a series of lie detector, truth serum and psychological tests to prove he is telling the truth. A psychologist at Columbus says mental tests indicate he is.

TO POLYGRAPH OPERATORS AND TO friends and associates, Novel has said the munitions burglary was no burglary at all — but a war materials pickup made at the direction of his CIA contact.

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Publicly, Novel called the munitions raidant "the most patriotic burglary in history" during a recent news interview. He immediately was shushed by his Columbus lawyer, Jerry Weiner.

Even more recently, Novel restated his charges against Garrison in a bylined story carried by The Dayton Daily News. Cryptically, he said, "I think Garrison will expose some CIA operations in Louisiana." He did not elaborate. His oft-repeated but unpublished account of how the explosives disappeared describes the bunker he says he helped empty as a CIA staging point for munitions destined to be used as part of the abortive Bay of Pigs attack on Castro's Cuba in April, 1961.

PRIOR TO THAT DISASTROUS CIA-staged operation, Novel says, he was working for the intelligence service at New Orleans. Part of his job, he contends, was to operate the Evergreen Advertising Agency as a front for CIA communications.

With funds funneled to him by the CIA, Novel says he prepared special radio commercials used on 300 stations in the U.S. and Canada. Their cryptographic messages, he claims, were to alert agents to the invasion date. The commercials advertised aluminum Christmas trees, he says, and the key alert code names were "Star Christmas Trees" and "Holiday Trees." In late 1960, \$72,000 worth of radio time was placed by the agency.

On the day the munitions were picked up, he says, he was called by his CIA contact and told to join a group which was ordered to transport munitions from the bunker to New Orleans. The key to the bunker, he says, was provided.

HE SAYS HE MADE THE TRIP in his own automobile, a Lincoln, and met several people there — all of them allegedly acting for the CIA. He identifies them as Ferrie, Arcacha, several Cubans, and another figure in the case.

They loaded the boxes of ordnance on trucks, he continues, and returned to New Orleans where the explosives were dropped in three spots — Ferrie's home, Novel's office building and the office of a stormy former FBI agent and New Orleans police official, Guy Banister, who died of a heart attack in the summer of 1964.

A friend of Banister's, a man whose word is considered reliable, told a reporter in New Orleans he saw 50 to 100 boxes of munitions in Banister's Lafayette st. office early in 1961.

Banister was a private detective then, operating a company called Guy Banister Associates. His friend said he saw the munitions in a storeroom-office, in boxes marked with the name "Schlumberger."

HE SAYS FIVE OR SIX OF THE BOXES were open. Inside, he says, were rifle grenades, land mines and some "little missiles" of a kind he had never seen before.

The friend said he remonstrated with Banister because "fooling with this kind of stuff could get you in trouble." He added:

"Banister said no, it was all right, that he had approval from somebody. He said the stuff would just be there overnight, that somebody was supposed to pick it up. He said a bunch of fellows connected with the Cuban deal asked to leave it there overnight."

Banister's friend said this happened well before the April Bay of Pigs invasion.

The munitions, Novel says, were picked up and consolidated soon after the New Orleans drops. He says they eventually were taken by boat to Cuba for use in a diversionary operation staged in conjunction with the Bay of Pigs attack.

Cuban sources in New Orleans say the cadre of Cubans trained by the CIA on the city's West Bank in 1961 was sent to Varacoa to make a diversionary assault. The attack did not come off because Castro militia was waiting and took the group prisoner.

NOVEL'S ACCOUNT OF THE explosives caper sharply conflicts with Garrison's charges against Arcacha and Novel. The DA's accusation says the burglary took place after Aug. 1, 1961—three months after the Cuban disaster.

The DA accuses the two men of conspiring to burglarize a bunker at an abandoned military base at Houma. Garrison's bill of information says the bunker was leased by the Schlumberger Well Services Co. of Houston.

Schlumberger officials say they know nothing of any CIA operations in connection with their magazine, where oil field service equipment and certain low yield explosives are stored.

As to the date the Houma burglary happened, no one seems to know or will say exactly when it took place. Schlumberger says it has no records. The Houma police say their records are missing, and the Terrebonne Parish DA, Wilmore Broussard, will not reveal the date he charges Arcacha and Novel burglarized the Houma bunker. He said it is "material evidence" in his case.

PLOTKIN, who stoutly denies participating in a plot to kill

Kennedy, was managing director of the International Trade Mart. He was with the organization for 19 years and in a commerce through America's second-ranking seaport.

On March 4, Paese Sera, an afternoon newspaper in Rome, carried a story which said Shaw is a director of a firm known as World Trade Center Corp. The newspaper, which is leftist in its political leanings, claimed the company was a CIA front operation.

It said the company moved its operations from Switzerland to Rome and has since transferred its offices to Johannesburg, South Africa, where it is still in existence.

THE SAME STORY, MINUS THE CIA allegation, was published in Rome's conservative newspaper, De La Sera, on March 5.

Incidental to his own story, Novel tells intimates the CIA may have asked Shaw to observe the traffic of foreign commerce through New Orleans.

In Ohio, Novel continues to live his free, loquacious life while waiting for the uncertain extradition machinery to grind away between governors' offices at Baton Rouge and Columbus.

He lives in a rent free apartment, drives a used car with dealer's tags and continues to promise he will send "Garrison down the drain" when what he says is the full truth is revealed.

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